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*The* **ETRUSCAN**  
*by Mika Waltari* ✨



*Historical Background & Map*

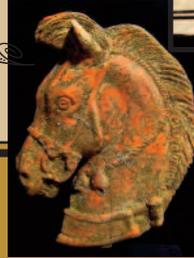
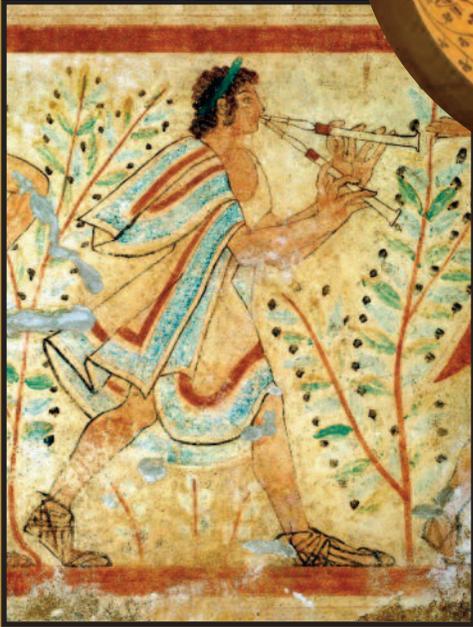
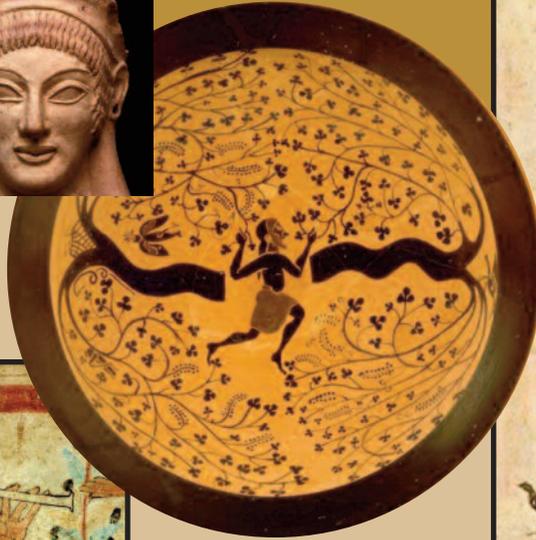
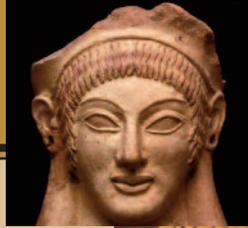
## THE ETRUSCAN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



The Ionian Revolt of 499 BC by several Greek regions of Asia Minor against Persian rule is the starting point of Mika Waltari's **The Etruscan**. The cities of Ionia had been conquered earlier by Persia around 540 BC. The revolt was finally ended in 493 BC by the Persian king, Darius. Because the revolt had been abetted and supported by Athens and other Greek city states, Darius in 490 BC planned an invasion that would divert the Athenian army to Marathon while his fleet would stealthily continue on to Athens while it was devoid of defenders. But the Athenians overwhelmed the Persian army at Marathon, then marched immediately overnight back to Athens 26 miles away. When the Persian fleet approached the city the next morning, they could see the Athenian army on the battlements. Darius abandoned the attempt, returned to Athens, and died soon after.

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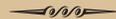
Meanwhile, in the Western Mediterranean, the wealthy city state of Carthage, whose Phoenician mother city state was Tyre, has grown to dominate the region. Her influence in western Sicily is bumping head on into the Greek centers of influence on the other side of the island, and violent encounters on land and sea are becoming more frequent. Carthage and the Elymians joined hands in 510 BC to oppose the expedition of Prince Dorieus. He had lost the Spartan throne and was seeking to found a colony, and showed up to colonize Eryx – after being expelled from Libya by Carthage in 511 BC. Dorieus was defeated and killed – the Greek survivors then founded Heraclea Minoa. Sicilian Greeks (probably the cities of Akragas, Gela and Selinus) fought an undated war of revenge against Carthage, which led to the destruction of Minoa and a treaty which brought economic benefits for the Greeks. An appeal for aid to avenge the death of Dorieus was ignored by mainland Greece, even by Leonidas of Sparta, brother of Dorieus, who later would win immortal fame at Thermopylae in 480 BC.

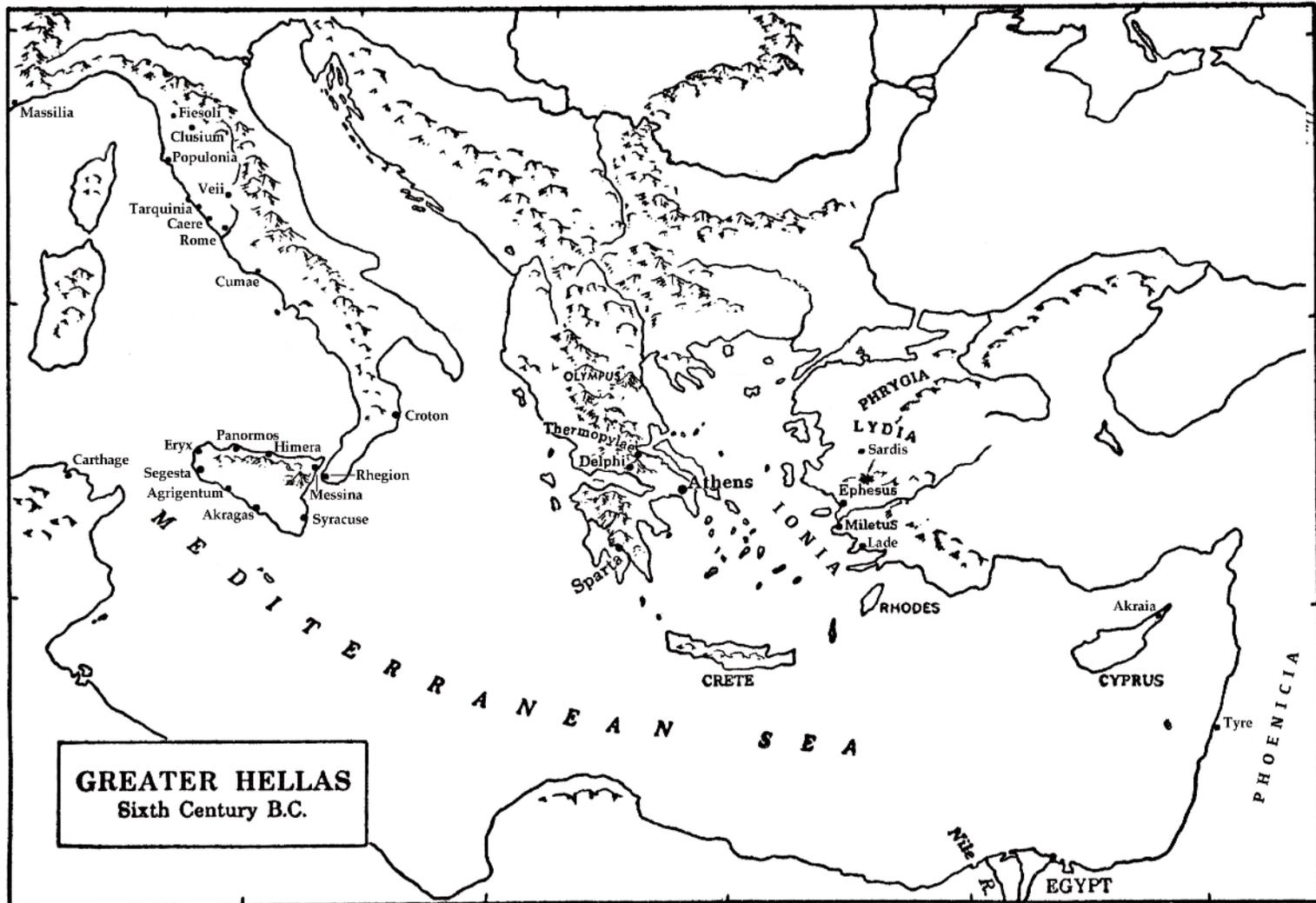


To the north of Sicily lies the Tyrrhennian Sea, bounded by Italy on the east, Corsica and Sardinia on the west, and Sicily on the South. Along the coast and north of the Tiber is a region called Etruria. It contains twelve major cities, some of which are on the coast, others inland. The largest is Clusium. The people of this area are the most civilized and powerful culture on the Italian mainland north of Cumae. The Romans threw out their last Etruscan king, a Tarquin, in 508 BC. The following year, the city is almost conquered by the Etruscan king Lars Porsenna, who famously calls off his siege out of admiration for the valor of the Romans. The Roman most famous for his Republican virtue during this period is the renowned Brutus, the son of Tarquinia, daughter of Rome's fifth king Lucius Tarquinius Priscus and sister to Rome's seventh king Tarquinius Superbus.

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Ten years after Darius' defeat at Marathon, his son, Xerxes, now Persian Great King, is moving toward a simultaneous land/sea invasion of Greece. His huge army rolls across Greece and down toward Athens. Although briefly checked at the pass of Thermopylae by a brave band of Spartan warriors (the famous "300"), the army succeeds in capturing a vacated Athens. The Athenian citizens boarded ships and sailed across to an island while their outnumbered fleet encounters the enormous Persian fleet in the narrow waters off Salamis. The Greeks win a stunning victory. Simultaneously at the other end of the Mediterranean, the Battle of Himera (480 BC), supposedly fought on the same day as the more famous Battle of Salamis, saw the Greek forces of Gelon, King of Syracuse, and Theron, tyrant of Agrigentum, defeat the Carthaginian force of Hamilcar, ending a Carthaginian bid to restore the deposed tyrant of Himera. It marked the beginning of a period of Greek hegemony over most of Sicily and the Mediterranean.







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